

Summary of

Metro Social Services Annual Board Retreat

Hosted by Metro Social Services of Nashville/Davidson County

Held on Feb. 1 & 2, 2008

Summary author: Judith Tackett, Tackett Communications International, 615-517-7000

Digital audio recording on CD-Rom available at Metro Social Services

The objectives of the retreat were:

- To become familiar with Commissioners learning, communication, and work styles to strengthen working relationships and positive problem solving;
- To increase board members' understanding of the Metro charter regarding boards;
- To understand legal mandates governing public boards and commissions;
- To review Results Matter and examine its role in the evaluation and funding of Metro departments and department heads; and
- To clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of Commissioners and their employee, the Executive Director

The retreat was organized around seven activities:

- The assessment of the communication and learning styles of each commissioner through The Kaleidoscope Profile® tool;
- A lecture about the history and content of the Metro Charter as it pertains to the Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners;
- A presentation covering legal mandates that govern public boards and commissions;
- A lesson about Results Matter, the Metropolitan government's strategic planning and performance measurement initiative;
- Staff presentations of Metro Social Services programs;
- A presentation and discussion of the importance to establish solid governance policies; and
- An overview of the MSS draft governance policy.

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1. The Kaleidoscope Profile:

Presented by Lorraine Williams Greene, PhD, Metro Police Department

Kaleidoscope is an evaluation profile that looks at the work and learning style people utilize. Each commissioner received an evaluation that examined:

- How the individual learns best: Kinesthetic learner, tactual learner, auditory learner, visual learner,
- How he/she likes to work: global or sequential,
- How he/she views the world: abstract or concrete; and
- Who her/she is: intuitive feeler, intuitive thinker, sensing judger or sensing perceiver.

Ms. Greene stressed that nobody uses just one way of learning, but each of us have preferences. Knowing these preferences about ourselves and about each other helps create positive group dynamics resulting in a good work relationship.

Each Commissioner received a handout containing Ms. Greene's presentation. In addition, Ms. Greene distributed a sheet containing each Commissioner's learning type.

She found that 63% of all Commissioners are kinesthetic learners, which means that they prefer hands-on activities and physical movement while working. In addition, 88 % of the Commissioners are global learners and view the world in an abstract manner.

Global learners prefer choices, brainstorming sessions, mind mapping, open-ended discussions, group work; they like inductive reasoning and like to learn through trial and error.

Abstract learners prefer lectures, reading and writing assignments, discussions about ideas, debates, and solving math problems on paper.

The goal of this exercise is to learn to use each other and build from each other's strength, Ms. Greene concluded.

2. Metro Charter:

Presented by George Cates, Jr.

The History of the Metro Charter

Attorney George Cates, Jr., told commissioners about the time Metro government was talking about consolidation of county and city governments. The most important step towards consolidation was a referendum of voters both inside the city and outside the city. In other words, a majority of voters in the city and a majority of voters in the county had to agree to consolidation of the two governments into one Metropolitan government.

In 1957 and early 1958, a plan for consolidation was developed. At that time, Mayor Ben West was in his first term as the mayor of the city of Nashville and Beverly Briley was in his first term as Davidson County judge.

Back then, the Davidson County state legislative delegation represented the district as a whole. In other words, each legislator served as an at-large representative of the entire county rather than representing a district within the county as is currently the case. Thus, only unanimous support amongst state legislators representing Davidson County would create enabling legislation to pursue a government consolidation of the county and the city of Nashville. Under State Sen. Harlan Dodson's leadership, enabling legislation was passed that allowed the creation

of a charter commission. The commission consisted of 10 members: Cecil Branstetter, Harlan Dodson, Victor Johnson, Dr. George Meadors, and Edward Hicks – all appointed by Beverly Briley – and Robert Chenault, Carmack Cochran, Z. Alexander Looby, Thomas McGrath, and Rebecca Thomas – appointed by Mayor Ben West (source: “Short History of Metropolitan Government for Nashville-Davidson County” by Carole Bucy, Nashville Public Library). The original charter, according to Mr. Cates, called for a mayor as chief executive officer and 21 Council members, 15 would be district Council members and six at-large Council members. The original charter did not call for a vice mayor. The charter provided for total consolidation of all aspects of city and county government.

The county was divided into two services districts: the general services district, which was countywide, and the urban services district. While streets and roads and police services would cover the entire general services district, citizens living in the urban services district would receive additional services such as fire protection, street lighting and additional police protection. One budget would provide funds for every agency in Metropolitan government. Council would have to approve a budget based on the initial proposal from the Mayor by June 30. A tax rate would be set for the consolidated government area, with an additional tax rate covering the urban services district.

The charter called for a strong mayor surrounded by a cabinet consisting of certain executive departments including police, fire, public works, and water and sewer services. However, there also were to be a number of special boards and commissions to work with budgets and funds provided through the tax structure. Such boards would be called semi-independent commissions because once the members were appointed by the mayor, they had the authority to name a director and determine policies and procedures under their supervision as long as they stayed within the budget.

There was a lot of enthusiasm for this charter with both newspapers, The Tennessean and the Banner, the Chamber of Commerce, the League of Women Voters and a most other city and county leaders in support of it.

Nonetheless, at the vote in 1958, the proposal failed. It had passed in the city of Nashville, but failed in Davidson County.

Mr. Cates continued to explain that the same charter in the state constitution, which allowed city and county to call a referendum on consolidation, also permitted annexation. However, annexation did not require a vote from the citizens living in the area to be annexed. Around 1960 cases came before the Tennessee Supreme Court to challenge that annexation amendment, but the court upheld the charter. Mayor West consequently prepared the annexation of the Green Hills area, which included 80,000 people in 42 square miles, into Nashville.

At the same time, the city for the first time implemented the green sticker, which was a \$10 tax on automobiles that drove within city limits. People who didn't put stickers on were arrested and charged. Now many people were upset with the administration for the annexation and the taxation of autos.

Talk about consolidation arose again. Consequently Mayor West and Beverly Briley appointed five members each to a committee that drafted a similar charter to the one proposed in 1958. The most noticeable difference in the charter was the number of Metro Council positions, which was raised from 21 to 40 (with four at-large Council members) and the creation of the position of vice mayor, who would be the presiding officer of the Council.

This time, there was division before the vote. Mayor West was against the charter, the Banner was against it, Judge Briley was for it and the Tennessean was for it. However, fear prevailed that areas such as Bordeaux and Madison would be annexed in a similar procedure as Green Hills and without a vote. Thus, in a vote in 1962 the second charter passed. Nashville and Davidson County became one of the first Metropolitan areas in the country. To this day, cities from across the nation still visit Nashville to explore their own charter amendments and consolidation efforts.

How the Metro Charter relates to Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners

Article 11 of the Metro Charter deals with Boards and Commissions, and Chapter 11 (under Article 11) deals with Social Services.

Metro Social Services is part of the general services district, which means that it covers the area of the entire county. In other words, whether dealing with the budget or implementation of services, commissioners need to look at the whole county and not just at isolated areas.

Countywide, the budget has to be determined no later than June 30 of each year. It then applies to the year starting July 1. Metro has one budget plan and that budget applies to every department.

What follows is a directory of the Charter as it pertains to Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners:

Part I, Article 1: General Provisions

This section explains among other things urban and general services districts; departments of metropolitan government; and the functions within the urban and general services districts.

Article 11: Administrative Boards and Commissions

Chapter 1 covers general provisions of boards and commissions such as qualifications of members, quorum, regular and special meetings, bylaws, employment of personnel, removal of board members, etc.

For example, Mr. Cates explained that for a person to be eligible for any board or commission, that person has to either live in the county or have a business in the county for at least one year. To do any legally binding business a commission needs a majority of members present. So for a commission with seven members, the quorum is reached when four members are present.

Each board needs to meet at least quarterly, but can meet more frequently if members choose to do so.

Each board adopts its own bylaws and spells out its rules as to when they meet, who has the authority to call special meetings, and how the board conducts its business.

Chapter 11 covers the Metro Social Services Commission, in particular this chapter describes qualifications and terms of members; their powers and duties; and the role of the director of social services.

The mayor has the authority to appoint MSS commission members who then have to be confirmed by a majority of the Council. Each term lasts five years. But members' terms are

staggered so that there is never a total turn-over of the commission by a mayor. A vacancy on the board shall be filled for the unexpired term.

The powers of the Metro Social Services Commission include:

1. To provide general assistance to residents and emergency assistance to residents and non-residents of the Metropolitan government.
2. To conduct social investigations and reports to the Council and other government agencies. In other words, commissioners tell the Council what they are doing and what they are planning to do (and how and why).
3. To engage in the study and research regarding the cause of financial dependency. That means that commissioners look at people with limited financial means and determine how to get these people out of the cycle of poverty.
4. To administer public and private grants for welfare purposes.

Mr. Cates explained that certain mandates can be imposed on local governments and if that is the case, it is the responsibility of the board to establish rules and oversee that such mandates are kept within the welfare arena in the county. Overall, the Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners has pretty broad powers and mandates.

As such, MSS can enter into agreements beyond county lines with other government entities. MSS can also work out agreements with nonprofit organizations that provide social services. It can make consolidated plans. The charter suggests that other agencies in Davidson County look to MSS for direction.

3. Legal Mandates Governing Public Boards and Commissions

Presented by Kerri K. Fowler J.D., M.P.H., assistant metropolitan attorney, Metropolitan Department of Law

The Sunshine Law/Open Meetings Act

Ms. Fowler started her presentation by explaining that the Sunshine Law (which actually is the open meetings law) requires that a governing body must be open to the public. To keep this legal mandate, the Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners must provide adequate notice to the public when a quorum of the board will meet to deliberate on a decision.

- The notice must be posted in a way that a member of the community could become aware of the meeting (for example in a countywide newspaper). MSS is also required to post agendas and minutes on the Metropolitan government Website.
- The notice must contain the reason for the meeting (agenda and actions that will be taken).
- And the notice must be posted in advance to give sufficient time for citizens to become aware of it (usually a week prior to the meeting).

If the board does not comply with the Sunshine Law, any action may become void. In addition to sufficient meeting notification, two or more members of the board should not deliberate toward a decision without complying with the Open Meetings Act.

Ms. Fowler explained that if commissioners are to conduct an on-site inspection of a program or project, such an excursion would not fall under the Open Meetings Act. However, if they were to start talking about an action plan that will be up for a vote at the next meeting, they are in violation of the law. Two or more commissioners cannot discuss public policy decisions outside of an official meeting.

The MSS board is not allowed to hold secret ballots, which means that each commissioner must vote openly or must attach his/her name to a written vote.

Public Records Act

Agency records are open to the public. The term agency includes boards, bureaus and commissions. Documents include photographs, records, letters, emails, etc.

Citizens can come in at all times during business hours to inspect public records. Government agencies cannot refuse public review unless it is of documents that state law specifically provides as confidential.

However, it is within reason that under circumstances where a citizen wants to see an extraordinarily large amount of documents or if the agency needs time to separate confidential documents from public documents, that staff tell a citizen that the agency will provide the documents within the next business day because it needs time to put the documents together. Confidential records include medical records, investigative records of the TBI (Tennessee Bureau of Investigation), and student records in public educational institutions. Especially when social security numbers are on a document, make sure the document is public and the SSN is blacked out.

It is wise to always contact the Metro Legal Department and ask for advice on which records are public.

Any person has the right to obtain copies of public records. Again the turnaround time to provide these copies needs to be within a reasonable timeframe. If an extensive amount of copies are requested, contact Metro Law to help determine whether asking for a cost is reasonable (reimbursement for paper).

If an agency contracts with private entities, the documents created by the private entity become public. It is prohibited to alter a document. Contact the Metro Legal Department concerning Metro's shredding law before destroying documents.

Generally, if in doubt, contact Metro Legal to help with clarification of an issue.

The Metro Ethics Law

The ethics law Metro Council adopted in summer of 2007 applies to all Metro employees including members of boards and commissions and elected or appointed officials. It states that officials cannot use their public positions for personal gain.

In other word, they **cannot**:

- Solicit or accept gifts (or bribes);
- Use knowledge they gather in connection with their Metro function for their own advantage;
- Participate in decisions or procurements in which they have a financial interest.

However, Ms. Fowler stated that commissioners can accept a gift on behalf of Metro if Metro keeps the gift. A big area where a lot of misuse occurs is when it comes to admissions, tickets, access to events or travel expenses. Those gifts cannot exceed \$100 in a year, unless the person

offering the gift is not doing business with the Metro government and the event is generally recognized as an annual fundraiser sponsored by a nonprofit organization.

Commissioner Howard Gentry asked how far the ethics law extends into a person's professional life. "Say if you receive a ticket to a Predator's game as part of your day job, can you accept it?" Commissioner Gentry asked.

Ms. Fowler answered that it depends. She recommended that in a situation as described by Mr. Gentry, a commissioner needs to take a step back. "If the person who gives you the ticket will benefit from your position as a board member, then don't accept it."

While such questions can be difficult, Ms. Fowler recommends erring on the side of common sense. If at the time of that decision, a commissioner has any inkling that the person giving the gift/ticket might ever come before the board, don't accept the gift.

Often times, the biggest consequences are that the media finds out about any abuse, Ms. Fowler said.

Since not all of the commissioners have filled out a conflict of interest form yet, Ms. Robinson said she would have a copy ready at the regular board meeting in February. Commissioners can search ethic issues by going to www.nashville.gov/mc/executive/index.htm and search for ethics/conflict of interest. However, as of the writing of this summary, Mayor Karl Dean has suspended the executive order on ethics, which was in effect under Mayor Bill Purcell.

Commissioners can be censored by the Council. They can come before the Metropolitan clerk where a resolution can be adopted by 21 Council members. The removal of a commissioner can also occur through a 21-member Council vote.

Ms. Fowler said she would further research whether a Metro employee can be a commission member.

When in doubt about ethics questions, contact the Board of Ethical Conduct.

Procurement Code

Metro provides for competitive bidding (unless it is an emergency) under the Procurement Code (Metro Code of Laws Title 4).

Competitive bidding means that for procurements of:

- Less than \$1,000, one oral or written quote is required;
- Between \$1,000 and \$3,999.99, at least three verbal quotes are required;
- Between \$4,000 and \$9,999.99, at least three written quotes are required;
- \$10,000 or more, competitive sealed bids or Request for Proposals (RFP) are required.

Privatization can only occur:

- After the Metro Council passes an ordinance;
- Displaced employees are offered another Metro position at equal or greater pay grade; and
- The Finance Department approves a cost/benefit analysis prepared by the department, which is accompanied by a written justification.
- However, professional services are exempt from this rule.

Contracts

Boards and commissions cannot bind Metro government into a contract without going through the appropriate channels. Individuals can be held personally liable for entering into a contract outside of the given authority.

To ensure proper legality of a contract consult with Metro Legal.

Security

Due to the recent break-in, Metro will tighten its security measures, which will be implemented through new executive orders and new ordinances.

Discussion

Frank Behm asked whether MSS has internal policies concerning how commissioners gather information from staff.

Ms. Robinson explained that her internal procedure is that commissioners go through the executive director when communicating with staff. This procedure is based on the Staff Board Communication Policy adopted by the Board of Commissioners. In the past commissioners occasionally gave directions to staff members, which often conflicted with directions from the executive director. In addition, Ms. Robinson said under the Staff Board Communication Policy procedure, she can assure that all commissioners receive the same information. For example, if one commissioner requests information, she will make sure that all the other board members receive the same answer. "Generally what I do, I get an email question and I copy all commissioners on the answer," Ms. Robinson said.

However, Ms. Robinson said she can't recall having enforced any measures that would not allow a staff member to speak directly with anybody, unless it involves media.

Ms. Fowler said the board can set up internal policies. The key, however, is that information is accessible to everybody.

**Christy Feldman is the attorney for Metro Social Services.
The Metro Legal Department can be reached at 862-6341.**

4. Results Matter

Presented by William Aaron, Metro Department of Finance

Seven years ago, Metro surveyed the budget process of different departments with a special focus on planning issues. One of the questions to departments was, "Do you have a strategic plan?"

Of the 51 departments within Metro government, only a handful had a strategic plan.

Consequently, in Fiscal Year 2002, Metro government started "a government-wide strategic planning and performance measurement initiative through the Office of Management and Budget in the Department of Finance," according to Metro's Website. The initiative was called Results Matter.

Results Matter basically is a strategic business plan. Metro Social Services started using Results Matter this year.

Results Matter is a tool to be used for management, communications and budgeting. It is a living management tool, which means the document reflects priority changes within each department. "Every

year, as we wrap up one fiscal year and prepare to begin the next, we go to the department and say, the doors are open, ask us what you want to change,” Mr. Aaron said. That can involve changes from mission and goals all the way down to some minor revisions.

Mr. Aaron examined the Results Matter document from Metro Social Services’ Mission statement to its issues, goals and programs.

The document lists six issue statements. Those are most important issues that MSS staff has identified as most essential to fulfilling its mission properly.

The six issues are:

1. A lack of technology-based documentation of services and tracking of performance measures;
2. Unemployment among MSS customers;
3. The complexities of an increase in collaboration between government and private sectors;
4. The aging of the population;
5. The increase in the homeless population; and
6. The reduction in safety net services.

Results Matter also includes notes on the consequences that are likely to result if MSS does not address these six issues.

In addition to the six issues, Social Services developed four specific, strategic goals dealing with:

1. Delivery of quality services that is data driven, research based and based upon best practice standards;
2. Establishment and delivery of services to frail, elderly and disabled persons to ensure that these populations will experience an enhanced quality of life and avoid unnecessary institutionalized care;
3. Reduction of chronic homelessness in Davidson County; and
4. Increase in stabilization of family, increase in support services to the working poor, and continued availability of burial services.

As of now, all goals still lack a timeframe.

Social Services came online with the Results Matter process this year, which means this process is very new to the department. Thus, some target dates are already included in the document, while some are not. The goal is to get as many of these target dates included in the current budget presentation/process.

The best timeframe to make changes to Results Matter, according to Mr. Aaron, is in May-July. However, he stressed that commissioners don’t have to wait until then to start working on changes.

After listing the goals, the Results Matter document goes past the strategic phase and gets down to the operational function of the department. Each program is described in detail and contains a purpose statement, which basically is a mini mission statement. The program statements also list output measures and explain how MSS intends to reach these goals.

Programs are the way Metro budgets. In other words, the following programs within Metro Social Services are budgeted: Homeless Services, Intake and Assessment, Homemaker, Nutrition, Family Services, Burial Assistance, Finance, Human Resources, Quality Assurance, Systems Administration, and Research and Evaluation.

“What we have done in Metro is that we have connected dollars and purpose and performance together,” Mr. Aaron said.

Results Matter helps departments to, over time, figure out whether they need more or fewer programs, whether they have set their measures too low or too high, how they best go about quality assurance, where their major focus should be, etc. The Results Matter initiative also helps departments to justify budget changes.

Ms. Robinson said the current budget supports this plan, and the proposed budget retained aspects of all the current functions.

Metro has recently launched a new internal performance data software system called Active Strategy, which will help departments measure their targets at least semi-annually.

Ms. Robinson added that MSS has quarterly data available for commissioners to review that show whether or not targets have been met. In addition, the MSS department prepares a monthly management report, which is another way to track the performance of the organization. Every second Tuesday of the month, from 8:30 until about 11:30 a.m., the entire MSS management team meets to do something similar to Metro Police's Comstat meetings. In addition, social workers receive monthly feedback from the MSS customer satisfaction survey. And every first Monday of the month, at about 11:30, MSS holds a senior managers meeting.

After Mr. Aaron's presentation, the chair appointed a nominating committee and a personnel committee to deal with the director's contract. Ms. Robinson said she has received an offer from Los Angeles, Calif.

During this discussion the door was closed so staff would not be informed prematurely, which would cause potential internal insecurities among MSS personnel.

Discussion ensued among commissioners about whether the Mayor should be informed at this point about a potential director change or not.

In the end, Hershell Warren, the liaison to the Mayor, said he would talk to the Mayor.

5. Staff Presentations of MSS Work

Adult and Family Support Services

Regina Williams & Tarver Smith presented the Adult Family Support Services, which employees 10 staff members consisting of one program manager, two support staff and seven social workers.

This MSS unit provides assistance to eligible Davidson County residents to help them develop or improve their life skills, increase their independence and improve family stability.

In their work, staff takes a family-centered casework approach. The goal is to help individuals within the family in order to improve family dynamics through enhanced interaction and communication skills.

Services this unit provides include: Life management skills; information and referrals, family centered casework, short term solution-oriented counseling; and direct services to individuals, families, elderly, disabled, and extended family members.

Satellite offices of the unit are located at the Martha O'Bryan Center and the McGruder Family Resource Center.

The unit maintains a community presence by promoting its programs through Power Point presentations and participation at workshops and conferences. In February, the unit had 10-12 appointments scheduled to go out and talk about its work with the Head Start program.

Most cases are walk-ins and/or referrals from outside agencies.

Sample case: A mother with two children was homeless and DCS had removed her children. The Adult and Family Support Services unit was able to help her find housing and work with DCS and Youth Villages to create total wrap around services for her. Now the woman has gotten her children back in the home. Ms. Williams said she was also able to provide life management skills to this mother to help her manage finances and other household matters essential for keeping the family together.

Senior Nutrition Program

Presented by Julius Witherspoon and Steve Lavigne.

MSS provides nutritionally sound noon-time meals to eligible seniors and disabled individuals at 15 congregate sites throughout the city. The unit serves about 1,300 meals every day. Because funding stems from local dollars (51%) with the rest from state and federal grants, the program has to follow certain federal mandates. Since the program contracted with MTA's AccessRide program, the customer base has tripled. Eligibility requirements for congregate meal sites include: Age 60 and older (persons under 60 are only eligible when they live in a senior housing facility where congregate meals are served), Davidson County resident.

MSS also provides home-delivered meals. Eligibility requirements for home delivery include: Age 60 and over; confined to home through illness or disability; unable to provide own meals; inability to receive nutritious meals from family, friends or other resources; and resident of Davidson County.

Referrals must be made by a health care provider such as a physician, home health care agency or hospital. Meal delivery starts two to three weeks after referrals are received.

The typical client is a 77-year-old female, both at the congregate site and the home-based meals. Davidson County reflects the national trend in that home-delivered meals outpace congregate meals. The population served is changing with the average age of customers increasing and more immigrants being served.

Sample cases:

- Doris is a white, 78-year-old lady. Her daughter works 10 hours a day. If Doris couldn't come to the congregate meal sites, she would be sitting at home by herself.
- Annie is a refugee from Ghana. She took English classes and now speaks the language well enough to get through the system on her own.
- One man was homeless. He now lives in a group home and volunteers at a congregate site regularly.
- Belinda was a surgeon at a local hospital. During a violent crime against her, she received traumatic brain injury. The nutrition program not only provides her with a warm meal, but also brings her together with other people to socialize.
- Mike lives in group home. He was a math professor at a university until he received a traumatic brain injury. When he came to the program two and a half years ago, he could barely tie his shoes. Now he reads and writes, ties his shoes and uses AccessRide by himself.

"It's not just a meal, it's not just transportation," Mr. Lavigne said. "Without us, these people would be home, without a life."

Mr. Lavigne, who manages the 15 congregate meal sites, said when the Maximus audit first appeared, it infuriated him because it described the Nutrition Program as just providing meals.

"It's not just a meal. This [service] is a reason for people to get out every day."

MSS partners with Metro Parks and MTA to provide activities and transportation besides the meals. Sites are determined based on the needs in an area. While the meals last about two hours each day, the sites are open for four to five hours every day and offer diverse activities to seniors.

Relative Caregiver Services & Adult Homemaker Services

Presented by Pat Wingfield and Catherine Pond.

The Relative Caregiver program supports grandparents (and other relatives) who are raising their grandchildren. These relatives have physical but not legal custody of the children they care for. MSS helps these families to develop healthy and safe environments, which are positive and enriching. The goal is to help children live with their families. MSS provides case work services, food and meal planning, light housekeeping, household maintenance, laundry, behavior management, communication skills, and budgeting and shopping.

The Homemaker program serves elderly, mentally and physically challenged adults who need help with household tasks and/or personal care. Homemakers assist clients with daily activities such as:

- Sweeping, mopping, vacuuming, washing dishes, and laundry;
- Personal care (bathing, showering, sponge bath, grooming hair);
- Grocery shopping, preparing meals;
- Assisting with simple health care routines such as reminders to maintain diet restrictions, medication regimen and recommended exercises;
- Observing and reporting changes within the home that may affect clients; and
- Giving emotional support and encouragement during periods of loneliness, depression and bereavement.

Eligibility requirements include: Low-income seniors aged 60 and older or mentally and physically challenged adults; adults receiving protective services from the Tennessee Department of Human Services; Davidson County residents with an income not exceeding \$1,200 a month for one person or \$1,400 for a couple.

The MSS Adult Homemaker Program is licensed through the state, and with the governor's new focus on home-based services, it has the potential to grow, Ms. Wingfield said.

Before a homemaker starts services, MSS prepares a service plan listing all activities to be done for a specific client.

Since homemakers serve the same clients, they are building a relationship with them. "Some clients don't have relatives, our workers are their social life," Ms. Wingfield said, adding that it sometimes gets to a point where a client doesn't want another worker to fill in when her homemaker is on vacation. "The staff becomes like family to them."

This relationship can be key to observing any wrongdoings from people who may try to prey on an elderly victim. Over time, a relationship between a homemaker and a client becomes intimate enough that seniors share information with the homemaker that they would not tell anybody else. Homemakers also ensure that the living environment for their client is as safe as possible: They make sure things are up from the floor so a senior doesn't fall, they change the batteries of fire extinguishers, etc. The program aims to keep people at home as long as possible.

Currently the program has 423 clients, with about 120 on the waiting list for homemaker services and personal care services.

Intake & Assessment Unit

Presented by Carol Wilson and Luz Belleza-Bins.

Davidson County residents who find themselves in a crisis situation often are referred to or go to MSS for help. Intake & Assessment is usually the first unit dealing with these individuals. The goal of the unit is to link individuals and families living in Davidson County with coordinated community services that address their emergencies and help stabilize crisis situations. The Intake & Assessment unit operates out of the MSS main offices and out of its Edgehill satellite office. Social workers also perform home visits.

Services provided include:

- Information and referral services to help people identify and obtain community resources that help them address their immediate needs;
- Indigent burial assistance to pay the burial/cremation costs of people that lived or died in Davidson County and did not leave enough resources to cover such expenses;
- Short-term support services to counsel people who need help resolving problems; and
- Community coordination to build awareness of the program, increase its accessibility and link MSS services to community partners.

Current partnerships include the Metro Health Department, Department of Human Services, Boys and Girls Club, Centerstone, Catholic Charities, Big Brothers, Conexion Americas, Tennessee Voices for Children, NES, Metro Water, several family resource centers in Davidson County, faith based organizations, and more.

Some cases have a tremendous impact on staff who care deeply for their clients, Ms. Wilson said.

Ms. Bins recalls a case where she supported a young family through a crisis, where she helped them find housing and stabilize their situation with a sick baby. The baby eventually died in peace and the parents were supported through their hard time by a caring staff.

Homeless Services

Presented by Giovanni Achoe and Angela White

Usually about 70-80 people seek help from the MSS Homeless Services unit every month. The unit addresses the needs of homeless individuals and families by providing supportive services and coordinating direct services with partner agencies.

The first step is an assessment of the situation, which identifies the needs of individuals and families seeking help. Then social workers develop a plan together with the clients to change their homeless situation. The unit also works with people facing homelessness to assist them when they are at risk of becoming homeless.

Direct services are delivered through partnerships. MSS works with local shelters, various agencies including MDHA, the veteran's administration and Project Return (for inmates who are released from incarceration).

The Homeless Services unit also works with a relatively new collaboration of churches called the Rooftop program. The Rooftop started in 2006 when Bill Coke began working with various churches because some homeless individuals were frequenting churches all across Nashville. Churches then decided to pool their resources and now are providing rental assistance to individuals and families in need of emergency financial help to maintain stability in their housing and prevent homelessness. The MSS Homeless Services unit performs the initial assessment for the Rooftop program and provides additional supportive services if needed. The Rooftop

assistance can go up to \$300, but people need to be employed and these \$300 have to be the last amount missing to keep them from losing their housing.

Additional services the unit provides include:

- Information regarding affordable, temporary and transitional housing in Nashville;
- Referrals to other agencies for health services, prescriptions, mental health services, veterans services, and assistance for past felons;
- Information about how to obtain a driver's license and/or birth certificate;
- Referrals to the Metro Action Commission for deposits for homeless customers who have located permanent housing; and
- Bus passes to help individuals obtain and maintain housing.

Sample cases: One lady with two children came to the Homeless Services unit in July. She had lost her job because something at work came up missing. She didn't get her last paycheck and faced eviction from her home. She received \$244 through the Rooftop program and remained in housing. This month, she returned to MSS and paid back the entire amount.

A family of seven came to Nashville from California. Their van broke down on the way and with their last money, they bought some Greyhound tickets. MSS helped them get into the Safe Haven Family Shelters and now they have jobs and housing.

Quality Assurance Unit

Presented by Michelle Davis.

The Quality Assurance unit ensures that quality is incorporated into every aspect of MSS administration. This unit looks at everything from service delivery to instruction. The goal is to ensure that these policy structures are understood and implemented. This is achieved through continuous education and staff involvement on all levels. Staff involvement occurs through internal committees and activities such as quarterly case record reviews. Quality Assurance also is involved in contract monitoring, overseeing that contracts are fulfilled, implemented according to best practice standards, program goals, etc.

This unit was essential in the achievement of MSS's COA accreditation.

Planning & Coordination

Presented by Abdelghani Barre

The MSS Planning & Coordination unit was created on July 1, 2005 as part of the new business model following the Maximus audit.

The unit consists of:

- Adult/Senior Service Coordination;
- Children/Youth Service Coordination;
- Immigrant Service Coordination; and
- Homelessness Service Coordination.

In fall 2007, the Homeless Service Coordinator position was moved to MDHA.

Each coordinator position collaborates with community partner agencies to better serve its target population and address the needs of the most vulnerable Davidson County residents.

The unit started the creation of a Social Service Plan to identify gaps in services in Davidson County and find solutions to fulfill those needs.

To that end, Planning & Coordination met with various organizations throughout the community during FY05/06 to learn about the services they provided. The goal was to gather information about how services could be coordinated more effectively.

During FY06/07, the unit developed procedures and protocols and held a roundtable to learn from national experts the best ways to provide planning and coordination services. Staff also met with neighborhood groups to collect their input about issues and concerns they have. A trend analysis resulted, which contained information about poverty, family, health and other demographic issues.

During FY07/08 Planning & Coordination completed a draft of the Social Services Plan, which is entitled *Strengthening Davidson County's Low Income Residents and Families*. On Aug. 16, the unit held another roundtable where it presented the plan to community organizations and collected their input. Planning & Coordination is now working on implementing the plan.

Commissioner Boehm said that in all his research he was struck by Planning & Coordination being the fiber of everything he's reading, even in what he is hearing at the retreat. "It seems like Planning & Coordination has this incredible job to do," Mr. Boehm said and asked where Mr. Barre would place this unit based on the importance of its mission to make sure that this department works properly.

Mr. Barre answered that the different programs complement each other. Historically, social programs have always been in place, whether run by government or nonprofit organizations. Things in this community have been evolving. Inner city factory jobs have been steadily disappearing with globalization taking them abroad. The traditional family with a man and wife as head of households has changed to where many households now are led by single females. "In order to impact what we see, we have to know what is out there," Mr. Barre said.

Planning & Coordination brings a plan, but as an agency, MSS needs to look at how it can collaborate within the community to serve the neediest people. So Planning & Coordination is one part of the picture that needs to interact with other parts.

Director's Report on the Budget

MSS Executive Director Gerri Robinson said the department met with the Metro Finance Director. Ms. Robinson said she thought the meeting went very well. At the end of the meeting however, the Finance Director said he was somewhat concerned to see a budget that cut programs and services to people. "He encouraged us to look at reducing administrative things like travel and training."

Ms. Robinson said she'll sit down with her administration team and try to come up with something that would retain the current service delivery system. There will be no recommended cuts in social worker positions, homemaker or nutrition staff. The bulk in staff reduction will come in the 5% reduction plan from Planning & Coordination positions. It does retain, however, the special projects director position within Planning & Coordination. This person will continue to do the research and try to find moneys. However, the staff from the remaining coordinator positions will roll back into management positions. MSS will not lose the skill sets and expertise these staff members have acquired over their years in service. In addition, being rolled back into these management positions, these staff members will have to carry aspects of Planning & Coordination.

To commissioner Boehm's question of what happened with the camp voucher program, Ms. Robinson answered as a direct services program, it would not be cut under this new proposal. Dr. Boehm said that this went against pretty much everything the MSS board hammered out at the December meeting.

Commissioner Dot Dobbins explained that the Finance Director in the meeting simply asked for an alternative budget that would not cut so many direct services because that was part of the Metro Social Services mission.

Further discussion centered on the ability of the Metro Finance Director to determine what kind of cuts a commission can do. Commissioner Howard Gentry said that the Department's budget lies within the Mayor's and Council's authority and the board of commissioners has to work within that authority and maneuver its way through it. Commissioner Gentry also said that as a department director Ms. Robinson does not have the standing to go against the request from the Mayor's Cabinet.

Commissioner Dobbins stressed all the alternative budgets were still on the table.

Ms. Robinson said the next budget meeting was scheduled for March when MSS will get a chance to meet with the Mayor to present the budget.

Commission chair Gwen Harris said MSS also has the option to work closely with other agencies such as United Way to utilize their expertise in Planning & Coordination.

Commissioner Price, who was absent at the December board meeting when the budget was decided, went on record to say that if he had been present, he would have never cut direct services to 1,100 kids. "1,100 kids without summer camp vouchers are 1,100 kids committing crimes," he said.

Ms. Robinson said unfortunately, last year, she had to cut everything except for direct services, which leaves now few options other than cutting more staff positions. "I understand that you gave a clear message last time that Planning & Coordination is important," she said. "I made a conscious decision to retain the research and fundraising work that Dinah will be doing."

Commissioner Dobbins said, "We as a commission are subject to administer a budget as it is handed to us by the Mayor's staff and Finance Department and the Council." The budget is the only restriction the Charter places on the Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners.

Commission Dobbins also mentioned that commissioners had an option to be present at the budget meetings and give their input.

6. Governance Policy

Presented by Ralph Schulz, CEO, Nashville Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Schulz talked about the importance of having a working governance policy. Governance, he said, takes discipline. "It doesn't work when board members among themselves act outside the behavior that they said is healthy and the rest of the board lets them get away with it."

Mr. Schulz bases his teachings on the governance model described in the book *Boards That Make a Difference* by John Carver.

The Carver model works in all types of environments because it is fundamentally the right way to do things and is applicable to varying circumstances.

Reasons for a governance policy

With boards and staff, there is a need for clarification of roles. In other words, what role does the governing board have and what role does the staff have. The Carver model particularly addresses that issue. “If the board acts appropriate to its role and leaves the staff to do what’s appropriate to its role, then the board is allowed to be more focused on the significant issues that it needs to deal with,” said Mr. Schulz, who throughout his presentation used the school board’s governance policy as an example of a great written policy model with bad practical implementation.

Understanding governance and understanding roles is relatively easy. What’s difficult is to build the mechanism that both creates a governance policy and also provides organizational discipline.

Board responsibilities:

1. Setting policy for your organization;
2. Holding fiduciary responsibility that has to do with the expenditure of resources and the acquisition of resources (for MSS board that’s a political process);
3. Hiring and firing your executive director/CEO and monitoring your CEO to make sure that he/she is achieving the goals you set out in your policy.

“None of you individually can act on your own authority as a commissioner. You are a governing body, you’re not governing individuals,” Mr. Schulz said. “Therefore, on those three things you have to come to an agreement, you have to achieve consensus. Whether you decide you have to have unanimity or not is policy that you establish.”

There are three essential questions to be answered:

1. What business are we in?
2. Who are we?
3. What are the needs of our customers?

While the governing board is the main body to answer what business the organization is in, additional input will also come from the staff and from organizations you collaborate with and which provide you with resources. Other target audiences are intermediaries and customers. Intermediaries are people who make decisions before the general customer base does. For example, if your audience/customers are children, then parents and teachers often are intermediaries.

In practices, the board says, “This is what we need to do.” Then the staff will go out and find out from the resources, intermediaries and customers what needs are out there to be served.

For the Metro Social Services board, one reality is that the mayor determines its budget. This means that the commission is independent, but the mayor controls the financial budget on which the board depends to achieve its goals.

Mr. Schulz stressed one important dynamic:

“As commissioners you act as a group. You don’t have individual authority as a commissioner, you have board authority as a group.

When you comment on things or you participate in things that are staff driven, then you are entering that discussion with a different role. You are not entering that discussion with the weight of your commissionership in play. You may be entering this discussion as a volunteer. You may be entering it as an intermediary.

Understanding this role for board members is really, really important because you have such significant power as the defining authority, as a board, that it's easy for organizations to lose sight of that, and board members begin to believe that their power as a board person allows them to dictate anything and everything."

Carver model

The board is at the center of everything (established by the Metro Charter), so the true power lies with the board. However, the board should not forget about other influences, in particular the mayor's power over the budget.

The Board decides what areas of policies it needs to define. In the Metro Social Services case it is:

- Financial
- Personnel
- Programmatic
- Contracting
- Political Advocacy

Mr. Schulz recommends keeping these policy categories to a maximum of six to eight. "Really, eight is a lot. You really need to be more precise." Mr. Schulz said it takes time and effort to describe each policy category.

The staff of an organization does not have any authority that is not delegated to them by the board.

The board can determine how detailed their policy will be. For example, the board can either leave compensatory decisions entirely to the director or they can tell the director to make decisions about compensations based on national averages or certain studies.

The board has to determine for each policy category how much decision power and latitude the director will have. This decision is based on how much confidence the board has in its staff. In other words, it is the board's decision to give and take responsibilities to its director based on the director's strengths. But once the board delegates this responsibility, it is up to the director to implement the policy.

The CEO/executive director does not have a vote. Her power lies in the implementation of the policies. She can make a proposal and bring it before the board. The board will evaluate the director periodically to examine whether the goals laid out in the policies have been achieved.

Mission statement

Mr. Schulz strongly recommended that the Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners revisit its mission statement. He said the MSS mission statement is difficult to defend in budget meetings with the administration. It is unclear about what exactly MSS does. "You haven't answered the question of what your purpose is, you've also intertwined objectives [and tactics]," Mr. Schulz said. "Your mission statement needs to be very precise." He also recommended that before a final vote, the board approaches the Mayor on the issue and gets his agreement, which will later help in the budget decisions. Having a strong mission, which has received mayoral approval, will help defend a budget proposal.

The MSS board will have to answer four basic questions:

1. Values: What do we believe;
2. Purpose: Why do we exist;
3. Mission: What will we achieve; and
4. Action: How will we achieve it.

“Unless you have precise answers on these questions, you will always have trouble defending what you do,” Mr. Schulz said.

Further discussion ensued about the fact that the last board lost four members and the past mayor did not replace those members. Since the MSS board did not have a forum, it was essentially impotent.

If there is a loophole in the Charter, Mr. Schulz recommended that the board start to advocate for a change to fill that loophole.

7. Metro Social Services Governing Policies

Presented by Barbara Toms, governance committee chair, Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners

Ms. Toms distributed and presented a draft of the MSS Governing Policies and said the governing policies are still a discussion point.

The governance committee consisted of Barbara Toms, Gwen Harris and Dot Dobbins. They met nine times since early 2007 with the last meeting being held in October. Resources used to draft this policy include the Metro School Board governing policies, Results Matter and documents from Metro Human Resources that deal with expectations for the director position.

The document begins with the definition of what the MSS board does and does not do as well as what the roles and functions of the board within the organization are. Ms. Toms went through the document and explained content and structure. The main aspects of the document explain:

- How the commission governs itself;
- What the relationship between the commission and executive director entails;
- What the expectations of the executive director are; and
- What the end results are (see Results Matter).

The governance policies are a top priority and will be on the next agenda.

Wrap up

Commission Chair Gwen Harris presented critical decisions & timelines to commissioners (see handout). Discussion occurred about the timeline to deal with the governance policy.

Commissioners see it as a top priority, but want to deal with the draft document issue by issue.

The personnel committee dealing with the executive director contract is another priority and will meet this month, as soon as sufficient notification is given to the public.

Commissioner Mary Kate Mouser suggested that a facilitator should help the board revise its mission statement. Further brief discussion centered on the budget meeting with the Mayor in March. Commissioners are welcome to participate in that meeting. Ms. Robinson also pointed out that one of the main things commissioners will have to face in the near future is the decision about privatization of the Homemaker and Nutrition programs. However, since it could affect the employment of about 80 people, the issue may have to be presented to the Council for a final decision.